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OPINION

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NOT HEEDED

In view of the 'Decade of Progress,' and particularly of happenings since the Twentififth June Nineteen Hundred Seventy-Five, readers will find of special interest the appreciation that appeared in *Opinion* on Eleventh August Nineteen Hundred Seventy :

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

"YES" muttered the sleeping lady, "yes, that's it". Her eyes opened, then closed again as she turned on her right in her comfortable bed in the air-conditioned room. For a few moments she lay still, then with a sigh sat up. "Can't sleep any more, well I must have had my six hours, yes it's three-thirty, so musn't complain." Moving to the adjoining room, she came back refreshed after a few minutes, and sitting down at her dressing table, examined her face carefully in its long mirror. "H'm," she said "not bad, in fact very good" and taking a very special bottle of Italian cologne, poured out a little on her palm and began to apply it to her temples. "Another Independence Day approaching," she said to herself, "one doesn't get much time to consider during working hours, so one may just as well take advantage of this unexpected early rising to look at, and into, oneself." Smiling at the image in the mirror "So what do you say? Are we happy? Not quite perhaps, but well on the way to happiness. Yes, a great change from two years ago. No longer that profound dissatisfaction with oneself and everything else. Why? What's happened? Simple, I have found power, real power, and its possession and exercise make me so satisfied as to be almost happy. Yes, after having been near it for so many years, in its anteroom, so to speak, and even in the same room with it, and always had to keep some distance from it, suddenly I'm holding it close and being embraced by it, and everything's changed. It's much more pleasing than loving, even when one is loved in return. Personal relations, something not quite, something missing about them at the best of times, in the best of circumstances, but this flame, superb, unalloyed! There's an inward glow within one all the time, and how it brightens one. Confess, very attractive mirror-companion, our mental equipment was never first class, nor our scholastic attainment considerable. But are we found wanting in anything today ? Do we not frustrate opponents, however clever and learned, at will, and leave them biting the dust? And how are we able to do this? The answer is simple. Power has taught us. My mind today is with power's aid sharper, my will tougher, than it has ever been before. Dear, dear power, stay with me always, and I swear I'll be worthier of you than any you've been with in the past. The first Elizabeth, even Catharine of Russia to whom the very courteous Alexis compared me the other day, you will completely forget. Yes, we won't let go of one another shall we, fierce sweet Power?

"I've heard a wiseacre ask, 'But for what? To be powerful may be fine, but surely the power must serve some purpose, otherwise why be powerful?' And he quoted something from an old-fashioned poet that has stuck in my usually unretentive memory. He said :

> Yet not for power,
> Power of itself would come uncalled-for,
> But to live by law, acting the law we live by
> Without fear, and because Right is Right,
> To follow Right were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

Quite absurd in my view. Why power? Because it is such joy to be with power. The use of power? To remain powerful, at the top and alone, everyone else below and looking up to one. Living by law? The truly powerful make their will the law, so that what they want to do they lawfully do. The will of the powerful is the right; there is no other, however much the weak may pretend otherwise. You agree, don't you, mirror-lady, I and you and Power together for all the foreseeable future, anh the Indian world at least our oyster. Of course, one can't say these things openly. One must pretend to be highly public-spirited, talk of the national weal, the poor oppressed, social justice, put oneself forward as the champion of the underdog. Hypocrisy is perhaps the most useful weapon in the armoury of the powerful. If you say reassuring things,

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you need never do them. Some odd minds of course take you literally, like that old crank who challenges me to fix Ministers's salaries at a round Rs. 72,000 taxable a year and live only on that, because I talk continuously about reduction of inequalities. Does he really expect me to give up my present 4½ lakh taxable emoluments? What does he think I am? A miserable powerless wretch like himself? Is the Prime Minister of India to live like a beggar?

"That I'll win the election there's no doubt at all. I've got the men, I've got the backing, I'll have the money too. By 1972 February people may make futile gestures, but who'll really oppose? The Cong(O) will have fallen to bits, the Swatantra is already in pieces, on the Jan Sangh some of my lures are beginning to work. With me will be the main part of the Congress, the D.M.K., the two Communist Parties, the Muslims. With all the functions I have taken over, money's already quite easy and will be easier in the next year. Cotton for your mills being delayed? Tut, tut, how sad, two lakhs for a worthy cause, no? Oh certainly. Some of the Bombay very old guard may try to hold off. Haven't any black money they say. Well that's their fault, not mine. Black or white makes no difference to me; the notes are not marked differently. Besides, there's always the good Soviet to help. Yes, with you at my back so firmly, dear Power, and my mind working so keenly under your inspiration, seeing so quickly every weak point of the opponents and taking full advantage of it, the election is really only a formality. Those who are not bamboozled, can be frightened, and there are other ways of dealing with the very few who can resist both fear and deceit.

"You will say, charming mirror-lady, if you are truly so strong, why is there all this disorder in the land, why Bengal, why the land-grabbing, and the Naxalites, why the seeming helplessness of Government everywhere, the general unease and uncertainty? I'll explain. Things are as they are because I want them that way. Do you think if I wanted otherwise, it would take me more than a month to settle Bengal? Send Dhavan home, put in a good man, tell the Army to help, push all the obstreperous types into jail, encourage the steady elements, and you have Bengal almost normal. So too a dose of firm government in all trouble-spots and India as it was at least in 1964. But where would that leave me? At best a constitutional Prime Minister with all the limitations of that role. And do I want to be limited? No, of course not. Power to the highest point, dear Power and I together at the very peak, that is my desire. If things get more and more in a mess, and most people are cowering with fright, nobody will care very much what measures I adopt and why, and so without very special trouble, I shall be able to take my place at the pinnacle of possible power, the headship of a Communist-type dictatorship. I shall keep up the appearance of Parliament for form's sake, but naturally there will be no real opposition, and no questions or criticism of me and my principal servants. I'll build a palace worth two crores then and nobody will even dare to say a word about it. Yes, nothing like a Soviet-type dictatorship for the power-loving power-loved.

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"Now you'll understand my affection for the Soviet Union and its chiefs. They are my ideal, what I want to be. No one has such power combined with such freedom of action. And I would do better than them too, for there would be no sharers of power with me. I would be what Lenin was or Stalin, the *vozhd*, sole chief. I certainly think that would be very good for this country of naturally idle, very individualistic people who refuse to be modernised except under severe compulsion. I'd tell them what to do, I'd see they did it. I won't pretend in the privacy of this chamber I'm doing what I am for the good of the Indian people. No, primarily it is for my own sake, but they would benefit too. You smile, alter ego. I'm happy you agree. With all this on my mind, you can see how very much beside the point seems to me all the fuss about what the Soviet Radio Peace and Progress says about some Indians or how the Soviet maps show Indian territory to be Chinese. I want the Soviet chiefs to be behind me in the great transformation I am proposing to bring about. What do I care if they call S. K. Patil or Morarji reactionaries or worse, or if they want to press for the early take-over of all Indian industry? I'm bound to take it over anyhow. The State, that will be me, and every Indian the State's, i.e., my employee. Then there'll be no dissensions and quarrels, no communal riots, no linguistic disorders, no boundary or water disputes, no strikes or bandhs, no ownership of property, nothing except hard work, obedience, and rational enjoyment. You feel doubtful, how will I get the people to go along with me? How have I got 222 Congress members to go along with me, and the D.M.K. and the Muslims? Some sweetening, some lathi-waving, inducement or disincentive in one way or another. Don't worry, almost all will trot along when they find I'm strong and determined. Some village Hampdens will undoubtedly meet their fathers somewhat earlier than they would otherwise have done but by and large we shall retain our non-violent reputation, live up to our spiritual heritage. Yes, we'll make a Pink, not a Red regime. None of those executions of twenty or more millions that the Chinese under Mao indulged in. A few thousands I don't think we can avoid altogether, but of course I won't like even that. . .

"The armed forces an obstacle to my plans, you feel? Maybe, but I don't think so. By the grace of Karl Marx, shall we say, since the name of God goes ill with our present belief, they are so unpolitical that if the forms are observed, they'll not look beyond them. I could take over the whole of industry and all residential accommodation in all the cities by Act of Parliament tomorrow and there wouldn't be a murmur from the armed forces. I think I could almost take over without any objection from them all the land, except that owned by serving men and their families. When the time comes, I shall of course be very careful about preserving the garb of legality, and just before that there will have been liberal increases in the emoluments and amenities of all ranks of the armed forces. No I don't forsee any special difficulty there. The civilian staff will of course readily come to heel. What are they doing even now? Only too hapy to destroy their class. No spirit, no gumption,

no willingness even to argue. The new types, especially economists and such experts, they sometimes make me feel I ought to throw a paperweight at them just to startle them. Said to some the other day, 'You told me at Budget time prices wouldn't go up. They have. Why ?' Do you think I could get a straight answer from any one? They didn't know; they wouldn't even say they didn't know. They hemmed and hawed, they broke out into snatches of ununderstandable jargon. If I hadn't kept on doodling assiduously, I would have screamed at them. When they left, I went into the inner room and lay down for five minutes to recover. Yes, experts are the limit by and large. When the State, i.e. I, own everything, I know what I'll do with them when their advice it stupid and they talk jargon. You know, on the whole life will be much simpler than it is today. Think of it, no opposition in Parliament, no inconvenient questions, no prima donna colleagues, nominal political parties, no real election fighting, no criticism of me or my top people by newspapers, all journalists writing to order, press conferences only to tell them what to say, friends from abroad like Kosygin and Brezhnev dropping in without anybody knowing, I going abroad at will and without notice and no one daring to say anything, the boys looked after handsomely, all matters, official and private, settled quickly and finally. All in all, it will be, Indira locuta, causa finita. I think I'll be quite upto it really, with dear Power's arm around me. No, don't smile, I'm not doubtful. . .

"Well, gracious mirror-friend, we've had a long talk, haven't we? Many thanks for clearing up my ideas. And now farewell. The full dawn will be upon us soon and I think I'd like to lie down again for a little while." And with that she switched off the light above the mirror and returning to bed, lay down and closed her eyes.

BOOK BROWSING IN SOLITUDE

SOLI SORABJEE

TO Hazlitt, one of the pleasantest things in the world was going on a journey. The real epicure that he was he shares the secret of true delight when he tells us: "I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone."

When everything under the sun is taxed why has no one seriously thought of implementing R.L.S.'s wonderful suggestion of levying a tax on all who have not read Hazlitt's delightful essay? Our fiscal lords have alas no daring and imagination; or perhaps whatever there was of it has been drained away in organising all these ingenious raids and schemes of which we have had our full share of daily reading.

For all who love nature and love to be alone it is Thoreau, who captivates their heart and soul. Waves of sheer delight overtake me when I read: "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore." To those who cannot understand how I can spend a week end all alone at that heavenly hill-station, Matheran, which is so near and yet in a sense so far, I ask with my hero: "Why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky way?" By now some one in the company is convinced that I am queer. But to make sure of that conclusion these sophisticated up-with-it town dwellers question: 'But how do you spend your time? How do you kill time?" To them I say: "If there is one crime which deserves to be penalised it is that of 'killing time.' It is a shame that there is no law against it. A lot of idle chatter and vile gossip would disappear if severe penalties were imposed for this horrible crime." Realising I have not answered their question, I again take my stand in Thoreau and reply: "The sun is alone, except in thick weather, when there sometimes appear to be two, but one is a mock sun. God is alone,—but the devil, he is far from being alone; he sees a great deal of company; he is legion. I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a bumblebee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house."

By now my sanity is distinctly under a cloud. So they ask me gently: "Don't you feel lonesome? It isn't healthy you know." Now they have given me an opportunity I was waiting for. Now I can quote my favourite Waldenalia and grandiloquently declare: "I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. *I love to be alone.* I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."

"But for God's sake, what do you do the whole day? You can't be walking or sleeping all the time." I can sense both impatience and suspicion as if I take a dame with me on the sly. "I go sauntering in

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the woods and after that I do book browsing. For total enjoyment I have to be alone, absolutely alone."

"Well in that case we will leave you absolutely alone to your damned self." And thank God, they do.

Book browsing this week and in December was sheer rapture. I picked up or rather borrowed one of those lovely Oxford publications, "Selected Speeches on the Constitution" edited by C.S. Emden. (I wish I have sufficient moral integrity to return the book to its owner. It is an agonising decision as the book is out of print and not available either here or in England).

Turning the pages at random my eyes fell on:

"SECURITY AGAINST UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT
SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY
House of Commons, 26 February 1817
(35 Parl. Deb., 1 s., 735 ff.)
[DEBATE on First Reading of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill.]

"Looks interesting," I said to myself and read on; and lo and behold what do I read? "The first point must depend upon a preliminary question, whether other means have been duly resorted to, and whether those means have failed of success? The noble Lord has repeatedly declared that the utmost vigilance of Ministers has been exerted; but it is now quite clear, from subsequent intelligence, that that utmost vigilance in truth amounts to nothing. It is admitted by the noble Lord that these traitorous designs have been proceeding for a considerable time before the aid of Parliament was required; yet, although Ministers have been fully apprized of the attempts upon the loyalty, the morals, and the religion of the people; though they have been in possession of the libellous and blasphemous publications so industriously circulated among the lower orders; yet, up to the present moment, not a single prosecution has been instigated against the authors. The excuse of the Attorney General for this procrastination is most extraordinary and curious: in truth, he said, the libels laid before him were so numertus that he could not see where prosecutions were to end. Where they were to end I do not pretend to decide but it is not very difficult to determine where they ought to have begun. The libels may be numerous, but, if they are, nothing has been publicly known of them till lately; and the more numerous the more urgent was the necessity that some of the authors should be severely published, as a terror and an example to the rest" . . . "As to the question, whether this suspension is adapted to the existing evils, the only individual who has contended that it is so is the Hon. Member who spoke last: he contended that, as sufficient evidence cannot be procured to convict, it is, therefore, proper to give Ministers unlimited power to imprison. As the delinquent cannot be brought to trial, he is to be punished without it. On the contrary, I contend that this measure is in no way calculated to meet the evil.

"The Government can fix upon no individual of leading influence or talent, whose arrest will check the progress of disaffection, and defeat the operations of the minor agents: all are alike insignificant, and the extent to which the infection has spread, and is spreading, is the real evil. Will the imprisonment of two or three poor wretches prevent the diffusion of the poison through all the intricate ramifications, by which it is conveyed to the public mind? If, indeed, they are publicly tried, regularly convicted, and exemplarily published, something would be gained—others would be deterred, for the fact would be known; but the mere unheard—of confinement of two or three mechanics would effect nothing is stopping the active mischief of particular individuals." Goodness Gracious, this is not very different from what Justice Rangarajan of Delhi High Court observed in the celebrated case of Kuldip Nayar. I read on completely engrossed. I almost feel Sir Samuel Romilly is in our midst when he declaims thus: "Much as I censure the adoption of this measure now, I am not one of those who think that the Habeas Corpus Act ought never to be suspended; under some circumstances the suspension might be wise and necessary; and those circumstances have existed when, on former occasions, persons of great consequence and influence were in league with an enemy, and when their arrest paralyzed the traitorous designs of all their dependents. But is such the case at present? Where can Ministers find one man of influence or consequence among the disaffected of our day? Where can they find even a man of the middle rank of life, among the vulgar, ignorant, and deluded wretches

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against whom Ministers are about to launch their vengeance? How then can this suspension be useful, unless indeed this Government follows the example of a State it has recently supported, against the avowed wish of the people, in which not merely obnoxious individuals, but the inhabitants of whole villages and towns, have been thrown into dungeons. Is not this, I confidently demand, a most powerful reason for refusing what is now required? Will the House intrust Ministers with a power by which persons of low rank and obscure occupations, in shoals, will be placed at the mercy of every truckling informer? . . . True it is that dangers threaten the country; but I would ask, is there no danger in empowering a few individuals to imprison all the rest of the subjects of the Crown, and that too without the slightest responsibility? Is there no danger in this suspension, when the standing army is so overgrown, and when already the Government possesses more influence that it has ever before enjoyed? Is there no danger even to general liberty, when foreign States, already sufficiently disposed to check its growth, should see this once free country placed under the absolute dominion of its Ministers on account of the absurd schemes of a few miserable Spenceans? Is there no danger in public opinion, and that even to Ministers themselves? Are they well assured that this measure will have, in truth, the effect of strengthening their weak hands? Will not the people see through the artifice of those who, under pretence of public security, are only endeavouring to secure themselves? In every point of view, I think the suspension objectionable: the dangers may be great, but the existing laws have not yet been tried; and, if tried, I am convinced that they will be found sufficient for every purpose of national protection."

Greedy that I am, I browse on for further delights. And not in vain either. Yet another delightful discovery is in store for me. It was a speech made by Robert Threshie Reid (afterwards Lord Loreburn) in the House of Commons on the 1st of March 1888 in a debate on a motion for an enquiry into the question of public meetings in the metropolis of London. A sounder and more eloquent exposition of the right of public meeting is hard to come by. Says the future Lord Loreburn: "No one disputes here, and I hope no one ever will dispute in the House—certainly I never shall—that it was not only right, but the absolute duty of the Government, to maintain order, and to put an end to meetings which became disorderly or assembled in a disorderly way. I think the Government would not be worth their salt if they did not interfere to prevent turbulence and to protect the public. That is a very different thing from saying that, because at one or two meetings in the course of forty years, symptoms of turbulence have been shown, therefore, they are to issue a Proclamation putting an end to public meeting in Trafalgar Square altogether. If the Government merely confine themselves to saying that when the meetings exhibited symptoms of disorder such as would lead a man of 'reasonably firm mind' to apprehend disorder and tumult, they would stop those meetings, I should have no words but those of commendation to apply to their conduct; but what I do object to is saying that, after a long series of quiet and orderly meetings held in Trafalgar

Square, because one or two were disorderly, the Government are to be at liberty to put an end to meetings being held there—to take advantage of some technical and legal argument to justify putting an end to the privilege that has been enjoyed for many years. . . .

"In my view, valuable as is the right of open air public meeting in all parts of the country, it is exceptionally valuable in London; in the first place, because there are few open spaces available where large meetings can be held, and again because those who are in the habit of attending these open air meetings are often so poor that they cannot go to the expense of employing public halls. Then again it is essential that the people of London shall have the right of open air meeting, because they have grievances which are most acute and affect enormous numbers of them. . . . The question is whether, inasmuch as agitation cannot under the circumstances of the case be confined to meetings in large halls, the evils under which London has suffered are to be reformed by lawlessness or by constitutional methods. I think that within the last few years we have learned a good deal as to the consequences of refusing to listen to moderate agitation. We have come very near teaching the people in some parts of the country, notably in Ireland and in the Highlands of Scotland—and I trust we are not going to teach them the same thing in London—the fatal lesson that mere remonstrance or attempt to consti-

tutionally reform their grievances will do nothing until there has been some open defiance of the law which will arrest public attention and precipitate reform. The Government seems to me to have improved upon this lesson, because they are now adopting a course, the effect of which will be to put a stop on the part of a large portion of the population to the right of expressing their grievances at all, inasmuch as they cannot express them unless they are allowed to assemble in public meeting."

How strangely and singular reminscent all these words are of the recent historic judgment of the Bombay High Court which struck down the order of the Police Commissioner prohibiting a meeting of lawyers who wanted to discuss matters relating to Civil Liberties and Rule of Law and thus denied citizens their basic right of public meeting and assembly. It is just as well that I do not believe in reincarnation or else I would have been almost convinced that Lord Loreburn has re-appeared on earth in the form of Justice Tulzapurkar who expressed similar sentiments when he deplored the humiliation inflicted by the Commissioner of Police upon the great metropolitan city of Bombay and its citizens by refusing them permission to hold a private indoor meeting, and thus denied them the right of assembly which has been historically exercised for ages!

Since it has become a fashion to quite Jefferson, and in fact no less a person than our Prime Minister has also quoted him in connection with amendments to Constitution, I was tempted to browse through some of his original works. It is generally believed that Jefferson thought that everything without any exception was subject to change and alteration. I was delightfully surprised to read in his letter dated June 5, 1824 addressed to John Carwright the following: "Wou will perceive by these details that we have not yet so far perfected our constitutions as to venture to make them unchangeable. But still, in their present state, we consider them not otherwise changeable than by the authority of the people, on a special election of representatives for that purpose expressly; they are until then the lex legum.

But can they be made unchangeable? Can one generation bind another, and all others, in succession forever? I think not. The Creator has made the earth for the living not the dead. Rights and powers can only belong to persons, not to things, not to mere matter unendowed with will. The dead are not even things. The particles of matter which composed their bodies make part now of the bodies of other animals, vegetables, or minerals of a thousand forms. To what then are attached the rights and powers they held while in the form of men? A generation may bind itself as long as its majority continues in life; when that has disappeared another majority is in place, holds all the right and powers their predecessors once held, and may change their laws and institutions to suit themselves. Nothing then is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man."

After this I could go no further. I had my fill of delight of book browsing, with the Moon and the Stars, and the little hill station with its twin sister Parbal, facing it, drenched in moonlight all to myself.

CPI'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

A. G. NOORANI

THE CPI is celebrating its fiftieth birthday with great fanfare but it is a measure of its failure that even a journal symathetic to its policies feels obliged to call upon it to "turn its back on the traditional habit of policy revisions to match developments outside the nation." It rightly points out that the split in the CPI in 1964 "was related more to the widening gulf between the Communist Parties of Russia and China than to domestic compulsions" (*Blitz*, December 27, 1975). In other words, torn between Moscow and Peking, the CPI split. One faction followed Peking till it was repudiated in 1967 in preference for the Naxalites, while the other (CPI) remained loyal to Moscow.

"We do not see the Soviet Union as a guide; no Communist Party, not just the Soviet Party, has a position of guiding influence" Mr. Enrico Berlinguer, Secretary of the Italian Communist Party said in an interview with Mr. Peter Nichols of *The Times* (November 25, 1975). Can anyone imagine a CPI leader saying that even now, fifty years after the Party's birth ?

Contrast this with the attitude of other Communist Parties. Mr. John Gollan, a leading member of the British Communist Party, in an article in the theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, disagreed with the Soviet clamp down on dissidents. The article asserted the Party's determination to pursue its own independent path towards socialism. Democracy, according to Mr. Gollan, involved expression of "various opinions, differing estimates, solutions and dissenting views." Stating that dissent was in itself an aspect of democracy, he went on to say : "Our party has repeatedly argued that such (dissenting) views should be dealt with politically and not by legal actions, expulsions from the country or confinement in psychiatric institutions. . . . A different handling of this matter would be a sign of strength in Soviet society." (*The Statesman*, January 7, 1976).

Senor Santiago Carrillo, the leader of the Spanish Communist Party, said in an interview published on December 14, 1975, that his Party could not accept a common line between the parties of capitalist Europe and the party—States of Eastern Europe. That would give "not another Communist Party, but another state, the possibility of interfering."

In the Party programme put forward by Carrillo it is stated that "the Socialism that has gained sway in the developing countries" will differ from the "Socialism that prevails in the countries that remain undeveloped." Distortions such as, for example, the "tendency to blur the borders between State and Party" and the "authoritarian tendencies" that have led to a "diminution of democracy" have been strengthened by "ideological and institutional factors".

Another Spanish Communist leader Senor Azcarate has opined that the Sino-Soviet clash was not due to ideological differences but to a clash

of national interests. "The root of the Chinese-Soviet conflict lies, without doubt, in the dominant role that the State plays today in socialist countries to the detriment of the role of the Party. . . . This distortion of the nature of Socialism, which is moreover marked by a restriction of total denial of socialist democracy . . . means that the role and the significance of the working classes and the masses is debased and devalued and limited to strictly subordinate spheres."

"When one loves liberty in Paris one must love it elsewhere, whatever the country," M. George Marchais, the French Communist Party leader, told the annual Congress of the Young Communist Movement in Paris on December 13, explaining his Party's challenge to the Soviet authorities in asking for a denial of the existence of forced labour camps for political prisoners in the Soviet Union.

Other Communist senior officials speaking at the Congress also emphasized the importance of the Party's stand, making it apparent that this was something more than an embarrassed response to the showing on French television on December 11 of a film showing a labour camp, which had been taken by a Soviet citizen and obtained by the French through the BBC.

The French Communist Party's political bureau issued a carefully drafted statement urging the Russians to deny that such camps existed. Recalling its opposition to all repression of human rights, the Party said that otherwise it would have to condemn "such unjustifiable acts which can only harm socialism."

The statement added that the film deserved the more attention "because of trials going on in the Soviet Union against citizens for their political opinions".

On January 6, 1976, M. Marchais reiterated his criticism of internment practices in the Soviet Union. He said that the link between socialism and liberty "is valid in all countries, and this rules out recourse to repression or measures of an administrative character."

"There can be no other conception of socialism," he added. It was for this reason that the French Party had made known its "disagreement with certain methods employed in the Soviet Union."

Let it be remembered that all these Communist Parties—the French, Spanish, British and Italian—are Communist Parties subscribing to Communist ideology and believing in closest friendship with the Soviet Union. But they have moved away from sterile, rigid position and thought for themselves about the role of a Communist Party in their respective, disinctive domestic settings.

It is impossible to expect such independent thinking from any of the Communist Parties, the CPI, the CPI(M) or the CPI(M-L). They are all slaves of dogma whether they follow the ideologues in Moscow, as the CPI does, or the ones in Peking, as the CPI(M-L) does, or yearn for approval from other capitals like Hanoi or Pyongyang, as the CPI(M) does.

As it happens, a very interesting and well-researched book has been published which sheds much light on the CPI's approach. At The Cross-

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roads by Dr. Ouseph Varkey (Minerva Associates Publications P. Ltd., Calcutta; Rs. 48). It is a study of the CPI's attitude on the Sino-Indian border dispute over the years 1959 to 1963. It is extremely well documented and provides an accurate account of those troubled times.

His conclusions, therefore, deserve attention. "The border problem instantaneously produced a spontaneous and intensely emotional response from all Indian parties except the Communist Party. The latter, so militantly nationalist on all issues which involved the West, balked at condemning China because it was a Communist country. For the same reason, the Party at first evaded the border problem and then equivocated on it. That was why it had to struggle so hard and for so long to take a nationalist position on the border issue. It also explains why some Communists opposed the National Council resolution (in November 1962) and obstructed its implementation.

"But most Communists had not forgotten the days of the 'People's War.' The Party then committed the mortal sin of being anti-people and anti-nationalist. That policy had made the Party a sort of political untouchable in the eyes of most Indians. But in 1942, public opinion in India was powerless as the Government was autocratic. More importantly, by weakening the national cause by its collaboration with the British Government, the Party gained the protection and patronage of that autocracy. In 1962, the situation was completely different. The people and the Government were in one camp fighting shoulder to shoulder the common enemy, China. All the political instincts of the Party impelled it to join that camp. In the case of other parties there was no conflict between their political instincts and their political beliefs. In the case of the Communist Party, they conflicted and their reconciliation was both difficult and painful. Every Indian Communist might have felt that conflict. Those in whom political pragmatism finally prevailed supported the November resolution."

Dr. Varkey notes that "The CPI's behaviour in response to the border dispute significantly differed from that of other Indian parties. These parties considered China the aggressor after the Ladakh incident. The CPI took three more years and needed additional evidence to reach the same conclusion. While other parties unanimously declared China the aggressor, a significant minority in the CPI, including some top leaders, doggedly refused to do so. The border dispute had no divisive effect on other parties, but it aggravated the differences in the CPI and left it on the verge of a split. Of all the Indian parties, only the CPI found its patriotism suspected and challenged in one of the most critical moments in the nation's life. The Governments expressed their distrust of the Party by imprisoning hundreds of Communist leaders. Other parties who had joined their hands under the slogan of "national unity" ostracized the CPI. The press was sceptical of the Party's patriotism, and the people wanted more positive proof than passing of a resolution."

It was not a sign of "nationalism" or of "polycentrism". For, as *Blitz* remarked, even the 1964 split in the CPI was due to the Sino-Soviet split. The CPI has yet to grow up into nationalism.

JUDGMENT

(The Tale of a Dream)

TWO o'clock on a cold winter night, and the old man, a ripe seventy-five, soundly asleep in his bed under a sheet and a blanket. Suddenly a luminous glow penetrated through his eyelids and his eyes fell open to behold a most beautiful and gracious lady in resplendent robes bending over him. As he tried to get up, she kissed him full on the lips, and he felt a shock go through him. The next moment he was standing and as he tried to move forward, she smiled, bowed and disappeared. Bewildered, he looked around and saw another wonder. There was he at least four paces from the bed and there was he stretched out on the bed. Moving cautiously to the bed, he examined himself carefully. No, the figure on the bed wasn't breathing; it lay inert, its eyes half-open, its lower jaw dropped. Ah, he had it. This was what they called being dead. "I am dead," he said to himself, "But no, I'm very much alive, it's my body that is dead. That mighty queen released me from it with her touch. Praise be to God." Turning to the body, he closed its eyes, adjusted its jaw, then stepped backwards, and made it a profound bow. "Do I feel a little sad at parting from it?" he asked himself. "Well, yes, perhaps I do. Much delight have we experienced together, much pain suffered. Sometimes it took over the reins completely, but generally, especially in the later years, I was in control, and a most willing steed it proved itself always. However . . ." and he looked out of the door that led to the long verandah.

Instead of it and the little garden beyond, he found, himself staring at a huge abyss, with a very thin red line rising above it from a base at his door. This he felt he had to get across, so with considerable trepidation, and the battle-cry of his ancestors on his lips, he stepped upon the single-brick arch. One step, two steps, three steps, the pathway seemed to broaden a little, four steps, five steps, six steps, it became easier, and by the time he had taken ten steps, he found he could move quite comfortably. Going along at a spanking pace, a pace he hadn't been able to command for at least fifteen years, he felt quite cheerful and was about to burst into song, when in front of him he noticed a group of five suddenly lose their footing, and with a horrible screech, tumble into the abyss below. The path had suddenly narrowed for them. Half a mile further on he saw two people being diverted to a rougher path that went westwards and noted the sadness on their faces. "Much more in this business than marching along merrily," he thought. An hour went past, then another half and he saw in front of him what seemed the end of the abyss. Off the bridge, he came on to a lush, dark green lawn, gay with flowers set in beds along the edges.

As he stood to admire them, an attendant emerged from a little hut, placed inconspicuously along a hedge and said, "Your name, sir ?" On

his answering the attendant looked at a little diary he carried and said, "Yes, sir, you are expected. I'm afraid you'll have to wait a little. The Serene is at the moment engaged." "Tell me," said the old man, "Who is the Serene ? I know nothing." "What" exclaimed the attendant, "you know nothing of the purpose for which you are here or the procedure to be followed. Incredible ! Surely those who took you, Powerful Death's men, informed you in these respects." "I met no men," said the old man. "Well, then, to put it crudely, who killed you, and don't tell me again, nobody did, because then you wouldn't be here, just answer," said the attendant. "Well," said the old man, "there was a most gracious, a most splendid lady, who smiled at me, and that was all." "God in Heaven," cried the attendant, "Death in person and in that garb ! Truly, sir, we did not know. You must be a person of the highest ethical consequence. You should have been met with a guard of honour and all the musical accompaniments. You must forgive us, we just weren't informed. It is perhaps once in an eon that Death condescends to appear herself and in that form to the deceased to be, so you see the reason of our error." "Come, come," said the old man "all that doesn't matter. Tell me about the Serene". "Ah, yes," said the attendant, "The Serene. He is the Daver, the judge of all souls. He decides their future. He has under him various departments, including the Records, and he is very powerful. For your private information, he is most amiable and at the same time, most perceptive, is said to have the keenest intelligence and the most formidable sense of duty in the universe. You are here to appear before him to be judged. But considering that Death herself came to release you and in that garb, I do not think you have much to fear." "Thanks, friend," said the old man. "Tell me one thing more. On the way here, I saw some fall into the abyss, and others being diverted off the main road. Had they been already judged ?" "Yes, on the basis of their records. The Serene you see cannot judge everyone personally. Only if a being needs special notice, does he have to appear in person. He must be above a certain standard of good or of evil. For the rest, his Lordship peruses every record with the greatest care, and decides. Since the record is full and complete, with not only every deed, but every thought and nuance noted, there is no room for error. Often though he picks out people with the most obvious record of evil for personal hearing. There is some good in them that hasn't been detected generally and he would temper the wind to them accordingly."

As he ended a bell rang, and signing to the old man to follow, the attendant went to a door in a wall, and opening it, handed the old man over to another, dressed in military fashion, who led him up to the foot of a dais, on which was seated in a leather chair a most impressive personality making a note in a file on the table in front of him. While he finished, two persons in long robes took up position at a distance of six feet from the old man, one on his right and the other on his left. The Serene looked up and two fat volumes were placed on the table by a clerk bowing low and saying "If the Daver pleases, the judgee attends." "Ah, yes," said the Daver, nodding to the old man, who bowed low. "I've

been through the papers. Quite tolerable, I thought, but I'll hear you" looking at the long robe on the left, the advocatus diabolus, the old man gathered. The long robe began in a sneering tone "My lord, you see before you the epitome of moderation, and, on that account, the fitter for the nether regions. A namby-pamby type, my lord, who needs a few centuries of burning to turn into a real man. Has he sinned vigorously and violently ? Has he been royally corrupt ? Has he deceived, lied, betrayed on a massive scale, as befitted the positions he held ? And has he then repented sincerely on all these counts ? No, my lord, neither the one nor the other. Accordingly for him there can be no compassion; in him there can be no interest. Not even the best psychological novelist could make anything of such an ordinary life, such a "oh-so-useful" life. True there was a time when I had hopes of him. If your Lordship will turn to the earlier section of the first volume, around page 54 I think, yes that headed 'The Whole World To Him Was Woman', some years of noble excess you will find. They might well have led to his redemption. All the elements of tragedy, of criminality, were there. They might have caused then murder, cruelty, treachery, fraud, deceit of every kind, vices unnameable, suicide. But he passed through such years unscathed, nay tranquil and serene, without any impress even on his essential nature and, stranger to tell, without any damage to the other parties concerned, so that no blame can attach to him even on their account. True he killed a few men thereafter, but that was in the way of duty and without malice. My friend on his right will no doubt claim for him a truly worthy life, examplary, he may even urge it was. I submit, my lord, that you should disregard that completely. This virtue was not a painful winning by effort, a long-fought battle against temptation. It came to him by nature, almost as breathing did. He was born in a Zarthosti family with very understanding and knowledgable, practising Zarthosti parents, so that Good became automatically the mainspring of his mind and heart. At twelve he had an awareness of right and wrong, honour and disgrace, which most men attain not, even after great pains and struggle, at the end of their time. This cannot be counted as merit to him; it was just part of his natural equipment, as is a good voice to a born singer. In all the circumstances, I claim him, my lord, for Satan. This virtue must be properly tested. Let him burn in Hell for a few centuries, and then you may decide."

The Daver smiled and said, "An eloquent and pointed presentation, Mr. Counsel. We have been enlightened, perhaps. And, now you, sir" looking at the long robe on the right of the old man. Said the advocate, "The Record speaks for itself, my lord, and you have already perused it. I will only say that the expression namby-pamby has no relevance at all in this case. The very positive, definite acts in support of the right, disclosed again and again by the Record, show that plenty of good, red blood has surged in righteous indignation through the judgee's veins. I rest on the Record my lord." "Now, you, sir," said the Daver to the old man. "Have you any remarks to offer on the address of the counsel on your left?" "Well, my lord, clearly it was special pleading, and so not worthy

of serious consideration, though I say it myself. But there were some valid points in it, such as that most of the credit for what may be considered the positive deeds, the good, that emanated from me, was due to my parents and upbringing rather than to myself, that virtue was part of the general atmosphere of my home and time and therefore again, no special credit for it should be given to me, etc. I agree that most of my life I have been 'doing—a what comes naturally,' not being tempted into wrong because of a kind of inherent insurance against it. If that renders me fit to be Satan's subject, well. . . ."

"Tell me," said the Daver, "What do you consider your worst points?" "Laziness certainly, my lord, and perhaps a kind of insensitivity to the views and feelings of some. These I am aware of, but there may be others that I know not about." "By the second part of your answer, are you attempting to curry favour with me?" asked the Daver. "Splendour of God, sir, you forget yourself" came the old man's prompt reply in a voice as cutting and cold as a well-tempered Toledo blade. "What . . . did . . . you . . . say?" asked the Daver, emphasising each word. "I said, sir," answered the old man, "that you forget yourself." "Explain," demanded the Daver. "Well, sir," said the old man, "Primarily you are a judge, the greatest in God's creation. You judge for God and in His Name. Is any judge entitled to insult one who appears before his court, either of his own accord or on a call by authority? You will, I am sure, answer No. Much less then is such behaviour expected from you, the highest and first of judges. I do not know if there is anything in the Record that suggests that I have in the past curried favour or that there is a possibility of my currying favour in future. If there is, I should like to heart it. For my part, I state categorically that I have never curried favour nor do I curry favour now, with any being, terrestrial or transcendental. This, sir, is what I meant by my remark." "And you expect me to judge you fairly after this?" said the Daver. "Yes, I do," said the old man. "You are not afraid I may have taken a dislike to you?" "Dislike, yes, you may have I suppose, but that won't I'm sure prevent you from doing the right, giving justice in a matter before you." "How can you be so sure?" asked the Daver. "From my own experience, sir," said the old man. "This is comparing very small things to very great once, but once in the distant past I was a Sub-Divisional Magistrate and used to spend half the day hearing cases. In one case, both the accused and his pleader, a leading lawyer from another district, seemed to me shifty in the extreme. After several hearings, I got to dislike both intensely, and they both sensed it, though I was careful not to say anything at all to confirm their suspicion. When I delivered judgement, they were both astounded. I had found the accused guilty on two minor charges for which he was responsible and held him not guilty on the third major charge which had been cooked up against him. The accused burst into tears, the lawyer gazed at me mutely with questions written all over his face. I sat silent for a few moments then said in the local language. 'This is a court of justice, not of prejudice; likes and dislikes both do not affect decisions.' Surely, what was obvious to a minor magistrate in a

remote area cannot escape the notice of the first and highest tribunal."

"That was well put, sir. But now to your charge of laziness against yourself. The Record does not mention it at all, which would be very strange if it were true. Indolence or sloth or laziness is, as you know, one of the cardinal sins, so it is a serious matter to say you are prone to it. How do you account yourself lazy, explain," said the Daver. "The day," said the old man, "has twenty-four hours; twelve sufficing for sleep, meals, ablutions, exercise, etc., there remain twelve. Of these twelve, I use on an average five for work, so there remain seven. Think of it, my lord, seven hours a day, two thousand five hundred and fifty-five hours a year, and all going waste in pottering about, desultory reading, sitting around. Why in the last ten years alone, if I had occupied them as I should have done, could not I have learned much, helped others much ?. "I see your point," said the Daver, "but the record not making mention of it remains a mystery. Ask the Chief Record Keeper to attend forthwith please."

The Chief Record keeper having arrived, the problem was put to him. The situation was unprecedented. The person being judged had charged himself with a cardinal sin and the Record said not a word about it. The validity of the whole record system was at stake, if this were so. On its reliability all the rest depended. The Chief Record Keeper, a calm and dignified personality looked through the two volumes relating to the old man and then sought permission to question him. "Certainly," said the Daver. "Now, sir," said the Chief Record keeper to the old man, "would you describe the state of your health during the last ten years as very good ?" "No," said the old man. "As good ?" "No, hardly that." "Well then, how would you describe it ?" "Not too bad." "Is your speed in walking four miles an hour ?" "No, two and a half at most." "Can you walk three miles at a stretch ?" "No, about three-quarters of a mile." "Has not your left eye, the eye the sight of which is gone, been a source of great trouble to you for some years ?" "Yes." "Does it not feel continuously as if there were grit or glass in it ? Has not your reading time had to be cut do[illegible] of it ?" "Yes, to both questions." "Has not your eye-surgeon [illegible] it remains as it is, he might have to remove it ?" "Y[illegible]

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